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ABSTRACT

Career services centers are discovering many of the world-wide job and career information resources currently available through the information highway and its primary thoroughfare, the Internet. The problem for students is that many do not have convenient access to on-line computer systems. The Career Services Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro provides students with practical and useful sources of employment information along with a detailed list of strategic instructions and keywords which prompt specific searches. Through search strategies, students are able to see a broader picture of career opportunities and identify jobs in specific locales (institutional, local, statewide, regional, nationwide, or worldwide). Additionally, use of the Internet may aid in the process of Reality Orientation (i.e., the individual sees what is actually available, what he/she is suited for, and where those opportunities exist). This benefits students because it broadens their horizons and narrows their job focus. As career center staffs have greater demands on their time, and as resources become more scarce for the purchase of job-vacancy information, access to the Internet will become a viable alternative to the methods currently used for assisting students. (LSR)

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Cruising on the Information Highway for Jobs: On-Line Career Development

by David J. Lundberg and Robert W. Thirsk

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Cruising the Information Highway for Jobs: On-Line Career Development

David J. Lundberg and Robert W. Thirsk

Overview

Career services centers are beginning to discover many of the world-wide job and career information resources currently available through the information highway and its primary thoroughfare, the Internet System. Access to this marvelous network of generalized and specialized information is becoming fairly commonplace for those who have the right equipment, are connected to computer systems that have on-ramps to this network, and know how to work their way through its seemingly endless by-ways.

Unfortunately, the problem for students is that many do not have a means of accessing on-line computer systems. In addition, without detailed instructions to provide the necessary directions and to help novice users avoid inherent pitfalls, the on-line experience can end up being an exercise in frustration. One way to encourage students to do job information research themselves is to design a road map to help them get the most out of the various on-line networks that provide useful employment information.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Career Services Center provided its students with the necessary vehicle and map to get them onto and cruise the superhighway of information networks. We explored many of the networks on the Internet system in search of the most practical and useful sources of employment information. A detailed list of instructions was created so that even the most novice of network cruisers could sit at one of several computer vehicles in the Center, log on, and cruise to and through some of the most useful networks without getting totally lost.

Keywords were identified so that students could be more specific in their search efforts. Finally, directions were created to "coach" students through their journey.

Strategy

The "road map" of directions follows a particular strategy. Job seekers are directed, first of all, to decide the geographic scope of their job search. Students determine if their job search is to be local, state-wide,region-wide, nation-wide or world-wide. If their search is local, instructions are given on how to access the portion of the university information network listing local job opportunities. If the job search is state-wide, instructions are given to allow students to access several of the other state university bulletin boards which contain lists of job vacancies. There are often lists available through several universities for both private and state government job openings.

For the person who wishes to expand the search to region-wide, nation-wide or world-wide, directions are given to switch to Internet and use "Gopher," the common information exchange system. Instructions are given for those who wish to navigate to positions in higher education, private jobs, federal government vacancies, or international job openings. Only the most user-friendly thoroughfares are recommended. "Toll roads", computer services which charge for job information, are avoided.

Recommended Course of Action

The first step is to determine the geographic scope of the job search. Beginning with State-wide, these are the suggested procedures.

1. Log onto the local campus on-line computer system. Specific details and names of "entries" will vary from location to location within any particular state.

2. If you are interested in local jobs, you would typically select "Bulletin Boards" to view jobs currently available. A typical selection would then be "Employment Listings" or some similar term, then either "Job Vacancies," "Position Listing" or whatever other term is used. This allows you to browse through local job vacancies.

3. If you are interested in other jobs within a state, go back to the main menu, then select "Other Information Systems" or some similar term, then search the bulletin boards of other universities for job listings. It will take some time to identify those universities that have good sources of job listings. It will also take some practice to learn the particular commands for navigating through the local system. You should be patient and follow the "Help" instructions which typically appear at the bottom of the computer screen.

4. To switch to Internet and use "Gopher," another information exchange system, leave the local on-line system by backing up to the main menu. Leave the main system by either selecting or typing "Quit." At the prompt, type "Gopher" and hit "Return". Then select "World-wide Gophers" bymoving the arrow down and hitting "Return". Remember that it may take a while to access this information, so remain patient as these directories are being loaded. Select "North America," then "USA," then "All." After the "All" directory is loaded, you are now at the point of searching region-wide, nation-wide or world-wide. At this point you should consider what type of position you are searching for in addition to the geographic area.

5. If you are looking for a position in higher education, select "Academe this Week (Chronicle of Higher Education)." Then select "Job Openings," then select

"Search Using Words." Decide whether you wish to search the entire list or a specific region and select the appropriate entry. You now must tailor your search by selecting a key word(s) to "browse" the job openings. For example, if you are looking for a job in counseling, you might type "counseling," "counselor," "counsel" or some combination of those words. It takes a little experimenting to determine the proper word(s) for an effective search. Once you have a list of job openings, select and review those that interest you.

6. Another source of information on job vacancies is the Online Career Center. Back up to the "All" menu. To access the Online Career Center, select "MSEN" then "Online Career Center," then "Search Jobs," then either "Keyword Search: All Jobs" or select a region. Again, you must decide on geographic area, then you must experiment with key words to use to browse jobs.

7. Finally, you may access the list of Federal Government Job Openings (including some private industry jobs) available through Dartmouth College. Go back to the "All" menu. Select "Dartmouth College," then "Career Services," then "Job Openings in the Federal Government." Again, you must decide on the geographic region you wish to access or the specific government agency you wish to view. Under "Job Openings in the Federal Government" is a listing of "Federal Government Position Announcements" and "Private Industry Position Announcements." When you view these sources, you must again "tailor" your search.

Advanced Strategies

The preceding strategy is designed for use by anyone, computer novices as well as "advanced computer hackers." For those who are more familiar with computer systems, and particularly, use of the Internet, there are many other resources available. The World Wide Web is an information service that has become the predominant method for accessing theInternet. There are many ways to access the "Web." Perhaps the easiest way is through a Web browser. Two of the most commonly used browsers are Mosaic and Netscape, and these are available through many college computer network systems.

Mosaic or Netscape are different than Gopher or local information system accessors in that they present multimedia interfaces to the Internet. They do more than present text, they link into other documents and can handle audio, pictures, and even video. They are exciting, and they are great, potential information sources for the job seeker.

If you have access to browsers such as Mosaic or Netscape, you simply double-click on the program icon. After the program loads and connects to your network system, you may travel to an information directory which presents additional job information. In Netscape, for example, a simple way of accessing this information is to perform a search for "Yahoo", which is a comprehensive and commonly used information directory.

Once you access Yahoo, you may select "Business", then "Employment", then "Jobs". This presents an extensive list of job listings and other career related information. Job information is constantly added and deleted. Browsing this list may uncover many additional job possibilities.

Finally, state universities often provide additional sources of job information on the Web just as they do through Gopher. Comprehensive lists of jobs currently listed through employment security commissions and office of state personnel vacancies are typically available. You may find this information by searching the Web for the appropriate state university "page". This provides "one-stop" access to very diverse sources of information.

Conclusion

In addition to the very important aspect of searching for employment and job opportunities, use of the information highway may provide other inputs to career development. Use of the highway may broaden a person's horizons to take in other locations and types of jobs which have not been previously considered. Using the highway can open new worlds for the job seeker to explore. The world is much larger than the help wanted ads in the local newspaper, and use of the information highway makes that largerworld very real and accessible. It helps people grow.

Use of the highway may also help a person narrow his or her focus to specific jobs and industries that are most desirable. The job seeker may discover that a particular area of employment is just what is wanted and needed. This helps people concentrate their efforts and energies in an effective way as their career develops.

One aspect of career development and maturity which is difficult to measure but very important is what is termed Reality Orientation. Learning what the world really has to offer and what truly fits is a process that every job seeker must face and resolve. Use of the information highway may aid in this process as the individual sees exactly what is available, what he or she is suited for, and where those opportunities exist. Along with broadening of horizons and narrowing of job focus, this can have a truly therapeutic effect on the individual.

Through these search strategies, individuals are able to:

- Make use of on-line services as one more weapon in their job search arsenal.
- See a broader picture of career opportunities, range of jobs, and the global employment arena.
- Identify jobs in specific locales (institutional, local, state-wide, regional, nation-wide, or world-wide).
- Improve their computer application skills.

As career center staffs have greater demands made on their time, and as resources become more scarce for the purchase of job vacancy information, access to the Internet system will become a viable alternative to currently used methods for assisting students. Just as SIGI Plus and Discover have become useful as "independent" career development tools, on-line computer systems are evolving into an exciting and important asset.

Resource Documents

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